

Poetry Goes to School:
Bringing Together Children and Poetry Through College Students

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

This paper serves to orient college students, the future instructors, to the Poetry Goes to School project. An explanation of the program which strives to expose children to authentic poetry and a discussion of how it is implemented in the classroom are presented. Distinctive qualities which set Poetry Goes to School apart and benefits for participants are listed. Through this paper, the concept of children as readers and writers of real poetry becomes logical in the curricula and limitless in the creative minds of young poets.

ink runs from the corners of my mouth.

There is no happiness like mine.

I have been eating poetry. -Mark Strand

To the college student:

Poetry and children - - If you are reading this, I am assuming you are interested in one or both. Or you could be desperate for those last few credits. Either way, in this paper, I plan to get you started on "taking poetry to school." You need not perfect your teaching methods nor memorize poetry anthologies. Instead, you must be ready to be excited about poetry and children.

What do you need to know to get started? After teaching poetry to children for five semesters, I have a few ideas about what is important for instructors to know. First, you should know why introducing poetry to children is worthy of the time it requires and what pre-existing opinions you may need to rethink. You should know what is being done in poetry instruction and who is doing it. The Poetry Goes to School program and method of instruction, what you are about to participate in, should be explained. You should be aware of the qualities which make Poetry Goes to School an excellent program. Finally, the benefits for everyone, you, the teacher, and the children, should be mentioned.

I hope the following information will help you as you begin to illuminate the world of poetry for the children you work with. The experience you have will be truly unique. No instruction manual can prepare you for the dynamics created by your personality in conjunction with a classroom full of tiny individuals. Enjoy each child and help guide him or her in a positive, risk-free exploration of poetry. Be careful, you also may be captivated by the elusive genre! I wish you luck and hope you emerge with ink running from the corners of your mouth!

"Miss Amber"

November 1999

Why teach poetry to children? Poetry is an expressive genre capable of conveying dreams, emotions, ideas, or opinions. Because of the range of subject matter, poetry is very versatile. Furthermore, the diversity provides opportunities to read and write about a variety of ideas. Poetry brings children numerous subjects to examine and they are able to write just as many creative, unique responses to the poems. Also, children are capable, imaginative poets. In a risk-free environment, they will be eager to write poems that model ones they have read. They are uninhibited in the thoughts they want to express. The creative ability of children is engaged when they are encouraged to write poetry. The Poetry Goes to School program fosters creativity.

By choosing to teach poetry to children, instructors face several misconceptions. To some, poetry is a genre for the elite with topics and structure too complex for children to understand or create. People variously believe that: poems must rhyme, there is only one correct interpretation, poetry can only discuss love and nature, or poetry is old and elitist. With such restricting ideas preceding it, the incorporation of poetry into children's curricula is difficult. The relationship between poetry and children is questionable. In the eyes of many, children and "real" poetry do not seem to mix. Therefore, the teaching and learning of reading and writing poetry does not occur with the frequency it should.

Real poetry means poetry that was not written for the purpose of teaching a skill (e.g. rhyme) or watered down for children. Real poetry is written for the expression of an idea or ideas and is not altered to be easily understood. Poems by Dickinson, Williams, Blake, Hughes, Angelou, and Strand are examples of real poetry. Many people believe children will not be able to understand real poetry. As a result, poetry presented to children is reduced to expositions of specific skills or "fluff." Fluff poetry serves little purpose: it was written for the amusement of children in a simplistic manner. Paul Sawyer, in There Once Was a Book of Limericks, introduces children to poetry such as the following:

"Once There Was a Ship Named *Goshen*"

Paul Sawyer

Once there was a ship named *Goshen*

Which sailed all over the ocean.

It began to leak.

It was just too weak,

To endure the wavy motion.

While the poem is humorous, it does not do justice to the entire genre. Children are capable of more difficult material and deserve to be exposed to real poetry. Fluff does not challenge the minds of children, nor does it expand their background on poetry. Few children will take poetry seriously after repeated exposure to nonsense poems. Skill poetry focuses on a poetic device or mechanical structure. Children should not read poetry just to see rhyme and alliteration being applied. Poetry has much more to offer. Poetry Goes to School provides the means to dispel many of the misconceptions before children begin to believe them.

With the development of Poetry Goes to School, came a program capable of bringing children and poetry together through college students. Beginning as a colloquium course based on the Kenneth Koch's Rose, Where Did You Get That Red? Teaching Great Poetry to Children, Poetry Goes to School has evolved into an effective means of introducing children to authentic poetry. Poetry is brought to elementary school students weekly by college mentors. Children are given positive experiences with poetry before biases accumulate. The instruction consists of reading "real" poems, engaging in discussions, making meaningful connections to the children's experiences, and allowing children to write their own poetry. Poetry Goes to School has several qualities which make the program develop into one that is distinctive among other methods and effective within the elementary school classroom.

Is anyone teaching poetry to children?

While classroom programs may not be widespread, articles in journals such as

Teaching PreK-8, *School Library Journal*, *Instructor*, and *Reading Teacher*, as well as instructional books, demonstrate an active interest in teaching poetry to children. In these, one can find suggestions for poetry discussions, writing, mechanics, display, curricular integration, and even bribery by food to read poems.

In *Teaching PreK-8*, Maryann and Gary Manning outline discussion questions that facilitate the instruction of poetry. Questions concerning personal enjoyment, rhyme, poem topic, and choice of words compose the lesson on poetry (100). Kimberly Bears, in *School Library Journal*, promotes poetry with popcorn. The children choose and read a "Pick of the Month" which is usually from Shel Silverstein or Jack Prelutsky while eating their treat (140). Playing with words and sounds is the focus of Bee Cullinan's method presented in *Instructor*. Cullian believes "a love of poetry is more caught than taught" and uses devices such as rhyme and onomatopoeia to "immerse" the children (71). For Maria Brountas, poetry is a vehicle for the instruction of the language arts. Through the poems, the students study punctuation, root words, compound words, grammar, and letter teams, among others (*Teaching PreK-8*, 40). *Reading Teacher* encourages the partnership of poetry, content material, and literacy skills. The result is poetry integrated into all content areas. Children learn about dinosaurs, pioneers, and division through poems or raps (434). While the articles demonstrate an interest, instructional books provide potential instructional models.

Kenneth Koch explores poetry instruction in Rose, Where Did You Get That Red: Teaching Great Poetry to Children. Koch states that there must "be a way to help [children] read and enjoy great poetry by adults" (xxi). Koch does use adult poetry and he avoids fluff or skill poetry which saturates the students in skills and mechanics. He denounces texts for presenting poetry dealing with "one small topic in an isolated way" (xxiv) and being condescending "toward children's minds and abilities" (xxv). Koch promotes writing through the development of a poetry idea.

Similarly, in Explore Poetry, Donald Graves argues for children's reading and writing of poetry. His approach also avoids lengthy dissections of poetry mechanics and meaning. Graves cautions, "Too much poetry has been ruined for children by lengthy introductions and careful directions on what they should 'learn' " (15). The poetry writing Graves suggests is more structured. List poems, first-line starters, poems from existing words, and poetry in prose are recommendations for children's poetry writing lessons. Graves continues with guidelines for responding to children's poetry "that will help [instructors] identify and encourage children's potential as writers of poetry" (49). Feedback is given to the children concerning details, verbs, metaphors, and elements of passion used in their poetry. Graves also encourages the integration of poetry throughout the curriculum. There are possibilities for poetry in science, social studies, mathematics, history, visual arts, and sports.

While these programs do present practical advice and illustrate the need for and interest in poetry, they do not encompass the distinctions which make Poetry Goes to School an exceptional program for children and a worthwhile endeavor for college students.

Who participates in Poetry Goes to School?

College students, elementary school children, and classroom teachers all come together in Poetry Goes to School. There are no prerequisites to the program; no ideal group or instructor. Instead, the people involved should be eager and enthusiastic about exploring poetry.

College students serve as instructors for the session. To the relief of many instructors, they frequently teach in pairs. Some participants are education majors or poets, however more often than not, they are neither. Instead, they provide positive exposure to poetry as role models for the children .

The classes involved can be of any grade level. Kindergartners have participated in

Poetry Goes to School. Lapel, Cowan, and Muncie are a few of the school districts which have experienced Poetry Goes to School. St. Lawrence School in Muncie, Indiana has participated in the program for five years. The school educates students with a range of abilities and backgrounds. Both struggling and gifted children have proven successful in the program. One child may be an excellent listener while another child may have strong verbal skills. Because Poetry Goes to School attends to many different types of social and academic learners, every child can succeed. Furthermore, participants in Poetry Goes to School include a fair representation of ethnic and socioeconomic diversity. As a result of having diverse backgrounds, the children challenge the program to create relevant connections to each individual. The preference in the program has been rural or inner city schools that have had little opportunity for enrichment. In such schools, children are more responsive and engaged. Those schools that are flooded daily by guests and visitors may not be as receptive. However, the overall success of Poetry Goes to School is not dependent on the ability, background, or environment of the student.

The cooperation and support of the classroom teacher is essential. The teacher sets the stage for Poetry Goes to School through a warm welcome. He or she must allot time from the regular schedule for the program. Furthermore, primary teachers must utilize buddies or aides to assist with the writing segment. Because, the presenters of Poetry Goes to School are not disciplinarians, classroom teachers remain in the room throughout the session to manage any disruptions. The college student instructors can take advantage of the expertise of the classroom teacher. In this person, they will find advice on more effective instruction and insight into individual children. The relationship between the college students and the classroom teachers is invaluable in the implementation of the program.

How is Poetry Goes to School taught?

Maybe the instructor is an education major. Maybe he or she is an English major. Maybe there are a pair of instructors with zero experience in either area. Despite the individual situation, the classroom instruction involved in Poetry Goes to School can be summarized in three simple steps. The weekly thirty minute session begins with the introduction and reading of the selected poem. Secondly, a discussion of the poem and its poetry idea is conducted. Finally, the children write and share their work. The full effectiveness of Poetry Goes to School is demonstrated when the subtle instructional elements are examined. Each college student, once comfortable in the basic presentation of Poetry Goes to School, will discover he or she has developed individual approaches and twists on the instruction.

The introduction of the session depends on the personality of the instructor and his or her relationship with the class. Well-established presenters will draw on past poems, poets, and poetry ideas to set up the new session. Making connections helps center children's thinking. Clearly, Frost's "The Road Not Taken" would be well received as the colors of fall begin to appear. "I'm Nobody! Who are you?," by Dickinson, is an excellent poem to use as an ice breaker. Immediately, the children are encouraged to tell who they are and the instructor can get to know each one. Opening with an anecdote or a question will set the tone and direction for the day's program. When beginning a poem focusing on an experience, open by asking if anyone has had a similar experience. For example, the children can divulge times when they have eaten something that another person was saving for later like in Williams' "This Is Just To Say." Reading the poem aloud several times following the opening takes advantage of the children's magnificent listening skills. Children, especially the very young, are attuned to auditory information; primarily because their reading skills are just developing. As a result, children in Poetry Goes to School can memorize and recall entire poems after one session. Six year-old Zac, a

student at St. Lawrence School, amazingly referred to a poem by Angelou he had learned six weeks earlier when studying a second poem, "Caged Bird," by the same poet.

Class: *"Miss Amber, you're reading too fast! Slow down!"*

Amber: *"Sorry! When a poem rhymes, I start to speed up. Does anyone know any rhyming words?"*

Class: *"Blue, clue! Fish, wish! Hat, cat! . . ."*

Amber: *"Great! Those words rhyme! What words in "Caged Bird" rhyme?"*

Class: *"Cage, rage! Trill, still, hill! Heard, bird!"*

Amber: *"Great listening! Zac, what do you want to share?"*

Zac: *"Miss Amber, I know more rhymes from the other poem we learned by Maya Angelou. It was called "Life Doesn't Frighten Me." It said, 'I go boo! Make them shoo! And fun and run and cry and fly!"*

He recited several stanzas and compared them to the poet's other poem. He had not only understood the poem well enough to use it in an observation; he was able to quote it and support his idea. Older children benefit from hearing the poem and seeing a typed copy. Those learners who are more textual can refer to the copy throughout the session. Whether orally or visually, the poem is most absorbed in the initial readings. In later sessions, the instructor may be surprised as classes erupt into spontaneous recitations of favorite poems!

The second, and most involved, step of Poetry Goes to School is the discussion of the poem and the introduction of the poetry idea. Poetry Goes to School maintains that there is no one "right" answer to a question or correct interpretation for a poem. The instructor should be prepared with several possible interpretations to throw out for the children. While one child may be capable of symbolic interpretation, another child may still be making very literal observations. As a result, the responses given in discussion are all valid because they are true to the particular child. What may seem off-the-wall to a

college reader, may make perfect sense to the child. Children are encouraged to share their thoughts, knowing what they have to say is important. More timid children may benefit from one-on-one interaction with the college student before they are able to respond in class. The purpose of the discussion is exploration leading to relevant connections for the children. Eventually, acceptable interpretations will emerge and win the floor. Without a meaningful connection a child will not internalize what is being presented. Take, for example, the following discussion on "Independence" by Milne.

Amber: *"What doesn't this person like?"*

First student: *"He doesn't like to hold hands."*

Amber: *"Why do you say that?"*

First student: *"Because in the poem it says he didn't want to hold hands."*

Amber: *"Okay. Anything else?"*

Second student: *"He doesn't like being told what to do by grown-ups. I know that because all the things he doesn't like to hear are things that grown-ups say to kids to get them to do stuff."*

Amber: *"Do any of you hear things you don't like from grown-ups?"*

Class: *"YES!!"*

Amber: *"What do grown-ups tell you that you don't like to hear?"*

Class: *"Wear your coat . . . Don't go real high . . . Be careful . . ."*

Amber: *"Why don't you like to hear those things from grown-ups?"*

Third student: *"Because I am big enough and I don't need to hold their hand when I cross the street. I can do it by myself."*

Amber: *"Do you think that is how this kid felt in the poem by A.A. Milne?"*

Third student: *"Yes, because he wants to do it himself too without being bossed."*

(The emphasis is on their opinions and ideas about what the poem presented.) When the children identify times when their independence was questioned, they understand a main

theme in the poem. To gain insight into their thinking, the children are asked to explain why they think what they do. The third student did not like to hear cautions from adults because he was "big enough." Because the objective is not to determine the *one* right meaning, the poem is not analyzed or torn apart beyond recognition.

Very rarely does a discussion involve a line by line dissection. Vocabulary is not emphasized in the program. Most of the time, the children will ask for clarification of terms they do not understand. Also, it is helpful for the instructor to note definitions crucial to the comprehension which may arise in discussion. For example, when introducing Milne's "Independence," most six year-olds will need help with the title. One approach follows.

Amber: *"What is something you can do all by yourself?"*

First student: *"Miss Amber, I can ride my bike all by myself without training wheels or my dad helping me!"*

Amber: *"Wow! You are being independent when you ride your bike; you are doing it all by yourself! What others things can you do independently, without help?"*

Class: *"Make cereal . . . feed the dog . . . read . . . button my coat."*

Amber: *"What does independence mean?"*

Second student: *"Being able to do something on your own without help."*

By being permitted to lead the discussion of the poem, children voice concerns about unknown terms and phrases they find crucial to the understanding of the poem. By talking about things they can do "all by themselves," the children are better able to identify what independence meant. The understanding results from being able to identify the term within their world.

Following the discussion of the poem itself, the poetry idea is introduced. The children will continue their discussion by identifying where in the poem the poetry idea is evident. For example, if the poetry idea asks students to write about a big dream they

have for the future, based on Hughes's "Dream Deferred," the students will identify the poet's dream and what has happened. They will interpret those parts of the poem which demonstrate their opinions. In order for the lesson to be relevant to the children, the poetry idea must be made applicable to the students' experiences. The brainstorming session allows children to expand the poetry idea into their realm. While Hughes's dream centered around racial equality, children may suggest dreams concerning college, vacations, health, wealth, and so on.

Amber: *"Langston Hughes's big dream was for all people, no matter their color, be treated fairly and equally. What are your big dreams? Not the ones you wake up with in the morning, but the ones that can make a difference."*

First student: *"Miss Amber, I dream that I will be able to go to college. No one in my family has gone yet and I know I can do it."*

Amber: *"That's wonderful. I know you will be able to make that dream come true. Anyone else?"*

Second student: *"My big dream is that all the violence in the world will stop. I think this is like Hughes's dream because it will take a long time and not everyone will do the right thing even though they should."*

Amber: *"Good thinking. Working toward ending violence is an important dream. How will you make that dream come true?"*

The poetry idea has been developed through the children's sharing of their big dreams. By ending with a question on how they will make their dreams come true, the writing segment is being explored. When the children think about their dreams and verbalize what it will take to make them come true, they are beginning to write their poem.

All of the students' suggestions are valuable and should be appropriately recognized (i.e., "Good thinking," "Great idea," "Nice imagination," etc.). Frequently the instructor needs to offer examples that follow the poetry idea to activate thinking; but the children

will generate many ideas. For instance, if the poetry idea centers around weather that is like certain animals, as found in Sandburg's "Fog," the instructor may offer examples like snow/butterflies, thunder/lion, and lightning/leopard to get the children started. Once the children are bursting with ideas which parallel the poetry idea, they are primed for the final segment of Poetry Goes to School.

By incorporating personal experiences with the poetry idea, the children create original poetry. Many poems will develop from the brainstorming done in class and others will be new approaches to the poetry idea. Angelou lists many of things which do not scare her in "Life Doesn't Frighten Me." By having the children name things they are or are not afraid of, they involve personal experiences. The creativity of the children is free to flow throughout the work. All of the children's responses are valid because they are the personal experiences and interpretations of the young poets. Maybe to the instructor the connection in the poem does not make sense. What matters, however, is that the child sees a connection and incorporates it into the writing.

While the children are writing, the teacher should encourage students to "do their best" in order to avoid a focus on grammar and mechanics. Spelling should be approached in the same manner. Take the following interaction:

Brock: *"Miss Amber, I can't spell leopard and that's the animal I want to write about in my poem because it is scary."*

Amber: *"Ooh, a leopard! That's a great animal to use! How do you think it is spelled? Do your best."*

Brock: *"I think it's l-e-p-e-r-d. I'll write that."*

Amber: *"Great! What else are you going to say about your leopard?"*

How a word is spelled during Poetry Goes to School is not as crucial as the idea it conveys for the child. It helps to remind the children to not worry about how a word is spelled and do the best job on the letters that they can. Punctuation and capitalization

should be minor details. If those elements are added, it will be after the ideas are brought forth. For some children, the lack of structure may be uncomfortable. Throughout the school year, children are diligently reminded to spell correctly and monitor mechanics. When the poetry instructor arrives and tells them to forget these elements, the children may need convincing to put aside the details. In order to smooth the transition, the presenters should help encourage and foster a non-threatening environment where the children understand the emphasis lies on the message rather than the structure. The children should be reassured that it is what they write that makes the poem; not the capitalization of each line or the correct spelling of every word.

Younger writers find it helpful to work with an older buddy. The buddy can transfer ideas to the paper before they are lost. Frequently, the younger participants of Poetry Goes to School create their poems after the session when they meet with their buddies. The brainstorming sessions give the younger writers ideas for their poems. When the buddies arrive, the poetry idea is shared and the younger student dictates his poem to his buddy. Older students, however, write while the instructor is present. While the children are writing, it helps to have the instructor circulate through the class and offer encouragement, monitor progress, and help remove mental roadblocks. To help older writers who may be stuck, the instructor could compose his or her own poem during the writing time. Shortly before the conclusion of writing, it is helpful to share the poem as an example of one interpretation of the poetry idea. For any child still struggling, the attempt by the instructor is an encouragement.

The culmination of the lesson is the opportunity to share the poems. Because the younger children do not have a completed poem at the conclusion of the session, they share poems written from the previous session at the start of each new session. Older children share their work at the end of the same lesson in which it was written. Poets are asked to read at the front of the room in the "poet's" chair. The chair is simply one that is

pulled from the classroom teacher's desk or a nearby table. Its only purpose is to set the young poet apart as they share their work. Children of all ages enjoy the luxury of sitting in the "poet's" chair. While everyone is encouraged to share, no one is forced to do so. It may take numerous Poetry Goes to School sessions before a child is willing to read what he or she has written and it is a possibility that a child may never want to present his or her work orally. Vincent did not share until his second year in Poetry Goes to School. Sharing can be done by the author, the instructor, a friend, or the classroom teacher. Praise is crucial for each child, and applause from the whole class follows every reading. Stickers, compliments, smiles, and questions can help recognize the achievements of the poet.

What goes into preparing a lesson for Poetry Goes to School?

Luckily for the busy college student, lesson preparation for Poetry Goes to School is very simple. Once a grade level has been assigned or chosen, the instructor should select poems to be used and begin to develop poetry ideas for each. Having a tentative schedule of poems ready for the classroom teacher helps in planning.

With poems chosen and poetry ideas ready to go, each lesson falls into place easily. Before the session, the instructor should practice reading the poem aloud several times. Children deserve to hear a poem read well the first time. In the initial readings, the instructor should look up vocabulary he or she is not sure of and note the definitions in case they arise in the discussion. Next, the instructor should examine the poem for several possible interpretations or themes. What are the children going to get out of the poem? Wordsworth's "I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud" offers several possible themes. For example, being lonely, observing nature, going for a walk, dreaming, and being cheered up are all possible ideas for the children to discuss. The instructor should be prepared with these possibilities and corresponding lines that support them. When the instructor asks the children to back up their opinions with what is said in the poem, he or

she has an idea of potential responses.

Having thought through the poetry idea and several themes, the instructor should create a lesson plan following the three steps of Poetry Goes to School: introduction, discussion, and writing. The lesson plan can be as formal or informal as the instructor sees fit; just so long as it serves as an effective guide for instruction. It is helpful to jot down an opening anecdote or question for the introduction. Perhaps the introduction should be the review of a past poem by the same author (in which case a copy of that poem would be helpful). Next, the interpretations and themes discussed previously should be noted for reference throughout instruction. Questions for discussion should be listed as well. These questions get the children to think about the poem and its relationship to their lives. The writing segment of the lesson plan will be brief. The poetry idea can be listed along with possibilities to get the children started. For instance, if the poetry idea asks the children to write about a time when they apologized for something they were secretly glad they did, the children may need some help building on the poetry idea. Having a small list of connections prepared is very useful. Ask if they have ever taken the last popsicle in the house on a hot day, stayed up late on a school night, or used the last of the toilet paper before their little sister and were secretly glad despite their apology. Such a list will eliminate having to create the connections at the last minute in front of an eager audience.

Armed with an outlined lesson, the instructor need only take care of a few more details. Older students benefit from copies of poems. The instructor should make a copy for each child, if working with grade 2 or higher. More often than not, the school will allow the college student to make the copies free of charge. For younger classes, a copy of the poem helps the classroom teacher in writing buddy sessions.

Other than putting together a plan of action for the classroom, the only other significant time commitment is reading the poems. At each session, the instructor should

collect a stack of the young poets' work to be read at home. The task is not lengthy, but it is so exciting to see the progress of each student; especially those not ready to share out loud. Writing a positive comment or placing a sticker on the paper lets the children know that their work was recognized and appreciated. At the next session, the instructor passes back the poems and picks up the next ones.

The final detail in lesson preparation is rewards. The instructor should decide in the beginning if he or she will provide stickers or something similar for the young poets. (That may simply be encouraging annotations on the students' poems.) One class of third graders loved receiving a sticker after they shared their poem in the poet's chair. They also found one on their paper after the instructor had gone over it and written a personal message on it. Because of these efforts, each child felt as though his or her work was valuable.

Choosing the poems and poetry ideas constitutes the most involved part of lesson planning. However, this only happens once. After the schedule has been laid out, the instructor need only spend as much time as he or she feels necessary for each poem. A half-an-hour review of the next day's lesson and another thirty to forty-five minutes of reading and enjoying the children's poems are typical. An hour of preparation and thirty minutes of instruction are insignificant time commitments even to the busiest college student when compared to the impact that will be made by the Poetry Goes to School program.

Why choose Poetry Goes to School?

Through several semesters of implementation and reflection, five qualities have been identified which make Poetry Goes to School an effective, relevant, and positive program for poetry in the classroom. By using "real" poetry, providing role models, building on a poetry idea, exploring a genre, and returning regularly Poetry Goes to School stands unmatched by other programs.

First, the poetry selected moves beyond children's rhymes and nonsensical verses. At least one child in every Poetry Goes to School class proudly recites the "Roses are Red" rhyme as a poem he or she knows. The program redirects the children to the work of accomplished, authentic poets. By moving beyond the silliness of Shel Silverstein and the mechanics of basal poetry, children can see the significance of the genre as a means of communication and expression in itself.

"Skill" poems, found in many basals, serve to exemplify ideas such as rhyming, alliteration, and similes. Poetry becomes one-dimensional for the children when focusing solely on skills. It fails to convey the ideas, emotions, and thoughts that "real" poetry encompasses. In order for children to appreciate poetry and recognize it as a valuable genre, the instruction must move beyond poems created for the purpose of teaching a skill. Real, or authentic, poems can be very powerful by creating a strong connection to the child's life. Real poetry is not created to exemplify a skill; therefore, it should not be taught as a succession of skills. When children are not searching for the highlighted skill or counting the syllables, they are able to relax and see the poem for what it expresses to them.

Finally, introducing "real" poetry at a young age builds a positive image of the genre. The students are sure to encounter Frost, Dickinson, Cummings, Hughes, and Angelou later in their schooling. Early meaningful and positive experiences with adult poetry can reduce anxiety. Poems in high school won't be as scary or "boring" if a student remembers them from grade school. The program presents poetry which becomes a resource; a file of poems they can draw from over the rest of their lives. Poetry Goes to School familiarizes children with poetry and convinces them that they are poets' intended audience.

The presenters of Poetry Goes to School have a tremendous impact on the students they visit. Children from rural and inner-city settings are interacting with a college

student. The young adult serves as a role model and a link to higher education that the children may otherwise be lacking. The college students are perceived as "cool" and confer "coolness" on poetry by association. By being a non-poet or an amateur, the presenter is in a better position to encourage the children to take risks by writing. The students see someone they can look up to who is also experimenting with poetry. Typically, the presenters will write their own poems while older students are composing in the session. While the quick poem provides a model for those who are "stuck," it also demonstrates that the college student is taking risks in his or her writing as well.

The poetry idea, adapted from Koch's writing, is the major distinguishing factor in the program. Koch defines poetry ideas as "suggestions given to the children for writing poems of their own in some way like the poems they study" (xxii). The poetry idea can be thought of as a single thread pulled from the woven poem. If a poem is created by weaving many emotions, themes, and topics together, the poetry idea is one strand that has been removed for closer examination. Koch goes on to explain, "The problem in teaching adult poetry to children is that for them it often seems difficult and remote; the poetry ideas, by making the adult poetry to some degree part of an activity of their own, brought it closer and made it more accessible to them" (xxii). For instance, after reading Frost's "The Road Not Taken" the poetry idea may be making life-changing choices. Following this idea, the children brainstorm situations relevant to themselves and then develop their own poems. They must consider situations in which a decision they had to make was monumental. In this way, the children are not dissecting the poem looking for the one true meaning, counting syllables, or defining words. Instead, they are leading a flexible, relevant discussion of a single theme demonstrated by the poem. Mechanics and poetic devices become the accents on the poem and not the focus. In *Poetry Goes to School*, it is the poetry idea which serves as the guide for the children's writing and a meaningful connection to their own experiences, thus bringing poetry *to* the children.

Poetry Goes to School further distinguishes itself by presenting poetry to children as an expressive and accessible genre; one worthy of the comprehension and contribution of children. The program makes poetry more than a time-filler. It moves the focus away from mechanics such as rhyme and meter. Poetry Goes to School also demonstrates how meaning is socially constructed. Through the program children begin to formulate and discuss their opinions, develop and write personal poetry, and share what they perceive and have created. Poetry, instead of being nonsensical, mechanical, or mysterious, becomes one more way for children to express themselves and be themselves.

Finally, Poetry Goes to School is different from other programs because it is long term. Where other poetry introductions may be a morning convocation or a Saturday afternoon enrichment course, Poetry Goes to School is continuous. The instructors work with the same group every week. A strong relationship is built between the class and the students. The children look up to their college role models as friends and anticipate the weekly sessions. (Ideally, the program will be built year upon year. Beginning in kindergarten with one instructor, the children move to the first grade to work with a new college instructor and so on.) Another benefit of returning to the classroom every week, is the feedback the children receive. The instructors are able to encourage the young poets and watch their writing develop. Similarly, the poems and poets can be reinforced week to week so that the children retain numerous selections. Poetry Goes to School saturates the children with the genre through its weekly lessons. Because it is part of the routine, the children look to poetry as a legitimate activity for their participation.

What are the benefits of Poetry Goes to School for those who participate?

For those who are involved in Poetry Goes to School, the rewards are phenomenal.

College students are provided an opportunity to give back to the community in which they are being educated. Poetry Goes to School is practice in volunteerism. The college students are admired by the children they visit. Each party grows attached to the other.

Poetry Goes to School is an opportunity to practice teaching and mentoring for education majors and non-teachers alike. It is also an opportunity to practice poetry for all.

Worries about exams, projects, and bills can be put aside for the thirty minutes while the children are captivated by what the college student brings to the classroom.

More than likely, Poetry Goes to School offers teachers a more positive experience with poetry than what they had as students. Many teachers avoid poetry because they do not feel comfortable teaching it. They have carried over the anxiety they experienced in school. Poetry Goes to School brings the instruction to their classroom. Along with the children, the teachers learn about poetry and themselves. Poetry provides an additional genre to the teacher to utilize as practice for reading, writing, and communicating.

An added benefit for teachers is the adaptability of the program. When there are no college students to present the poems the teachers can easily implement the program themselves. As stated previously, the instructor need not be a poet for the program to be effective. Following Poetry Goes to School, the teacher can develop simple lessons and continue to enrich his or her classroom with poetry.

The students by far receive the most benefits with poetry in the classroom. For children as well as adults, Poetry Goes to School is a positive experience to increase their comfort level. Exposure to real poetry will show the genre in a respectable light. Poetry ideas make the poems meaningful to the children. They are able to apply ideas and emotions to their own lives. Through the extensive reading and writing of poetry, children can take pride in their work and take responsibility for their ideas. Because there is no correct way or right answer, self-confidence can be built. The children cannot be wrong, thus reducing a lot of anxiety. Finally, the children are given a strong base of knowledge to build on. They will have been introduced to a variety of real poems. They will encounter these poems and others like them throughout their education and perhaps in their life; through Poetry Goes to School the children will have a solid background to

draw from.

Poetry and children can be a powerful combination. Poetry Goes to School allows children access to an expressive genre through a unique medium: the college student. The experiences created for the children by the college instructor, and vice versa, are priceless. Through poetry, children are exposed to new ideas and experiences. Through the program, the children are able to create a strong background of poems which will aid them in the future. By using real poetry, providing mentors, identifying a poetry idea, and presenting the genre as a viable form of expression, Poetry Goes to School allows children to excel at a subject many adults have deemed too difficult for young minds.

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This collection of poems and poetry ideas provide an excellent resource for starting Poetry Goes to School. The poems are examples of the authentic poetry discussed throughout the text. The possible poetry ideas are numerous for each selection. Given after each poem is a potential poetry idea along with several questions. The questions may be used to promote discussion and thought on the topic. The poems are not limited to the poetry ideas contained in the anthology. Also, many of the poetry ideas can be adapted to be more appropriate for upper or lower grade levels. The poetry selection encompasses great names which the children will see again in later schooling. Early experience with such names gives children a head start in and a realistic image of the genre.

Caged Bird
Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still

and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem describing how you would feel about being caged? What freedoms would you miss most? Would you protest your captivity? Would you "sing"?

Life Doesn't Frighten Me
Maya Angelou

Shadows on the wall
Noises down the hall
Life doesn't frighten me at all
Bad dogs barking loud
Big ghosts in a cloud
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Mean old Mother Goose
Lions on the loose
They don't frighten me at all
Dragons breathing flame
On my counterpane
That doesn't frighten me at all.

I go boo
Make them shoo
I make fun
Way they run
I won't cry
So they fly
I just smile
They go wild
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

Tough guys in a fight
All alone at night
Life doesn't frighten me at all.
Panthers in the park
Strangers in the dark
No, they don't frighten me at all.

That new classroom where
Boys all pull my hair
(Kissy little girls
With their hair in curls)
They don't frighten me at all.

Don't show me frogs and snakes
And listen for my scream,
If I'm afraid at all
It's only in my dreams.

I've got a magic charm
That I keep up my sleeve,
I can walk the ocean floor
And never have to breathe.

Life doesn't frighten me at all
Not at all
Not at all.
Life doesn't frighten me at all.

*Poetry Idea: Write a poem about what scares you and what does not. Why are you afraid?
What makes you brave? What do you do when you are scared?*

Sleeping on the Ceiling *Elizabeth Bishop*

It is so peaceful on the ceiling!
It is the Place de la Concorde.
The little crystal chandelier
is off, the fountain is in the dark.
Not a soul in the park.

Below, where the wallpaper is peeling,
the Jardin des Plantes has locked its gates.
Those photographs are animals.
The mighty flowers and foliage rustle;
under the leaves the insects tunnel.

We must go under the wallpaper
to meet the insect-gladiator,
to battle with a net and trident,
and leave the fountain and the square.
But on, that we could sleep up there.

*Poetry Idea: Write a poem about an unusual place you would like to sleep. Where is it? What
do you see? Why would you do it?*

The Tyger *William Blake*

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?

And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

Poetry Idea: Write a poem in which you are able to ask an animal any question you like and they could answer you. What animal would you talk to? What question would you ask? What response would it give?

Under the Boathouse David Bottoms

Out of my clothes, I ran past the boathouse
to the edge of the dock
and stood before the naked silence of the lake,
on the drive behind me, my wife
rattling keys, calling for help with the grill,
the groceries wedged into the trunk.
Near the tail end of her voice, I sprang
from the homemade board, bent body
like a hinge, and speared the surface,
cut through water I would not open my eyes in,
to hear the junked depth pop in both ears
as my right hand dug into silt and mud,
my left clawed around a pain.
In a fog of rust I opened my eyes to see
what had me, and couldn't, but knew
the fire in my hand and the weight of the thing
holding me under, I knew the shock of all
things caught by the unknown
as I kicked off the bottom like a frog,
my limbs doing fearful strange strokes,
lungs collapsed in a confusion of bubbles,
all air rising back to its element.
I flailed after it, rose toward the bubbles
breaking on light, then felt down my arm
a tug running from a taut line.
Halfway between the bottom of the lake
and the bottom of the sky, I hung like a buoy

on a short rope, an effigy
flown in an underwater parade,
and imagined myself hanging there forever,
a curiosity among fishes, a bait hanging up
instead of down. In the lung-ache,
in the loud pulsing of temples, what gave first
was something in my head, a burst
of color like the blind see, and I saw
against the surface a shadow like an angel
quivering in a dead-man's float,
then a shower of plastic knives and forks
spilling past me in the lightened water, a can
of barbecued beans, a bottle of A.1., napkins
drifting down like white leaves,
heavenly litter from the world I struggled toward.
What gave then was something on the other end,
and my hand rose on its own and touched my face.
Into the splintered light under the boathouse,
the loved, suffocating air hovering over the lake,
the cry of my wife leaning dangerously
over the dock, empty grocery bags at her feet,
I bobbed with a hook through the palm of my hand.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem describing how you felt when you have been trapped somewhere. Where were you trapped? What did you think? Were you in danger? Did anyone help you? How did you escape?

Oh, My Love Is Like A Red, Red Rose
Robert Burns

Oh, my love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
My love is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune.

So fair art thou, my bonny lass,
So deep in love am I;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt wi' the sun;
And I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run.

And fare thee weel, my only love!
And fare thee weel awhile!
And I will come again, my love
Though it were ten thousand mile.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem that tells how long you will love someone. Who is the person? What will you measure passing time with?

Anyone Lived In a Pretty How Town
E.E. Cummings

anyone lived in a pretty how town
(with up so floating many bells down)
spring summer autumn winter
he sang his didn't he danced his did

Women and men (both little and small)
cared for anyone not at all
they sowed their isn't they reaped their same
sun moon stars rain

children guessed (but only a few
and down they forgot as up they grew
autumn winter spring summer)
that noone loved him more by more

when by now and tree by leaf
she laughed his joy she cried his grief
bird by snow and stir by still
anyone's any was all to her

someones married their everyones
laughed their cryings and did their dance
(sleep wake hope and then) they
said their nevers they slept their dream

stars rain sun moon
(and only the snow can begin to explain
how children are apt to forget to remember
with up so floating many bells down)

one day anyone died i guess
(and noone stooped to kiss his face)
busy folk buried them side by side
little by little and was by was

all by all and deep by deep
and more by more they dream their sleep
noone and anyone earth by april
wish by spirit and if by yes

Women and men (both dong and ding)
summer autumn winter spring
reaped their sowing and went their came
sun moon stars rain

Poetry Idea: Write a poem that tells a story. Who is in the story? What is going on? What happens to the people? How does it end?

A narrow fellow in the grass #986
Emily Dickinson

A narrow fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides -
You may have met Him - did you not
His notice sudden is -

The Grass divides as with a Comb -
A spotted shaft is seen -
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on -

He likes a Boggy Acre
A Floor too cool for Corn -
Yet when a Boy, and Barefoot -
I more than once at Noon
Have passed, I thought, a Whip lash
Unbraiding in the Sun
When stooping to secure it
It wrinkled, and was gone -

Several of Nature's People
I know, and they know me -
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality -

But never met this Fellow
Attended, or alone
Without a tighter breathing
And Zero at the Bone -

Poetry Idea: Write a poem describing an animal without using its name. What details can you use as clues to the animal's identity in your poem?

I'm Nobody! Who are you? #288
Emily Dickinson

I'm Nobody! Who are you?
Are you - Nobody - too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd banish us - you know!

How dreary - to be - Somebody!
How public - like a Frog -
To tell your name - the livelong June -
To an admiring Bog!

Poetry Idea: Write a poem in which you describe who you are. What makes you special? What makes you "you"? Are you a somebody or a nobody? Why?

This is my letter to the World #441
Emily Dickinson

This is my letter to the World
That never wrote to Me -
The simple News that Nature told -
With tender Majesty

Her message is committed
To Hands I cannot see -
For love of Her - Sweet - countrymen -
Judge tenderly - of Me

Poetry Idea: Write a poem to the world. What do you want to say? What is so important that all the world should know?

Running Lights
James Finnegan

A faint afterglow of red behind the hills,
and the tops of the pine trees
are all mist and woodsmoke now.
Up the darkening headwaters of a little trib,
the swifts give way to bats.
Nobody's going to find you, no one
is even looking. Time measured
in the tick of insects against the screened-in porch
where you are falling asleep in a chair.
The lake is very still, slate-gray all the way to a sky
nailed down with a few evening stars.
The night is all water, water is all night.
So this then is loneliness, awakening
at some indefinite hour after midnight,
a small boat with its running lights on
moving over the water, fishermen going home
or heading out for the day.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem about your favorite place. Use descriptive words and images to paint a picture for the reader.

The Road Not Taken
Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I -
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem a life-changing choice you have had or will have to make. What was your choice? Why did you decide what you did? Would you redo it if you could?

Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening *Robert Frost*

Whose woods these are I think I know.
His house is in the village though;
He will not see me stopping here
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer
To stop without a farmhouse near
Between the woods and frozen lake
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Poetry Idea: Write about a place you are going or want to go to. Where would you go? What would you see along the way? How would you get there? Who would you see?

Dream Deferred *Langston Hughes*

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore -
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over -
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Poetry Idea: Write a poem about what happens to dreams that don't come true. Where do they go? Who keeps them? Do they disappear, die, hide, wait, etc.?

Agua, ¿Donde vas? / Water, Where Are You Going?
Federico Garcia Lorca

Agua, ¿donde vas?

Water, where are you going?

Riyo voy por el río
a las orillas del mar.

I am going down the river, gurgling
to the shores of the sea.

Mar, ¿adonde vas?

Ocean, where are you going?

Río arriba voy buscando
fuente donde descansar.

Up the river I go looking
for the source where I can lie at ease.

Chopo, y tú ¿que harás?

Poplar, and you? What will you do?

No quiero decirte nada.
Yo . . . temblar!

I don't want to tell you...
nothing. Trembling. . . I will be!

¿Que deseo, que no deseo,
por el río y por la mar?

What do I want, what don't I want,
by the river and by the sea?

(Cuatro pájaros sin rumbo
en el alto chopo estan.)

(Four birds without direction
are high in the poplar tree.)

Poetry Idea: Write a poem in which ask something in nature where it is going? How is it getting there? Why is it going?

Independence
A.A. Milne

I never did, I never did, I never did like
"Now take care dear!"
I never did, I never did, I never did want
"Hold my hand."
I never did, I never did, I never did think much of

"Not up there, dear!"
It's no good saying it. They don't understand.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem about your independence. What can you do all by yourself? What things do you still need help with?

On His Blindness John Milton

When I consider how my light is spent,
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide,
"Dosth God exact day labor, light denied?"
I fondly ask; but Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: "God doth not need
Either man's work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve who only stand and wait."

Poetry Idea: Write a poem that explains why certain misfortunes occur. Why are people blind? Deaf? Poor?

Sleeping In the Forest Mary Oliver

I thought the earth
remembered me, she
took me back so tenderly, arranging
her dark skirts, her pockets
full of lichens and seeds. I slept
as never before, a stone
on the riverbed, nothing
between me and the white fire of the stars
but my thoughts, and they floated
light as moths among the branches
of the perfect trees. All night
I heard the small kingdoms breathing
around me, the insects, and the birds
who do their work in the darkness. All night
I rose and fell, as if in water, grappling
with a luminous doom. By morning
I had vanished at least a dozen times
into something better.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem in which you describe yourself vanishing. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you become? How does it feel?

Beware: Do not read this poem
Ishmael Reed

tonite , thriller was
abt an ol woman , so vain she
surrounded herself w/
many mirrors

it got so bad that finally she
locked herself indoors & her
whole life became the
mirrors

one day the villagers broke
into her house , but she was too
swift for them . she disappeared
into a mirror

each tenant who bought the house
after that , lost a loved one to
the ol woman in the mirror:
first a little girl
then a young woman
then the young woman /s husband

the hunger of this poem is legendary
it has taken in many victims
back off from this poem
it has drawn in yr feet
back off from this poem
it has drawn in yr legs

back off from this poem
it is a greedy mirror
you are into this poem from
the waist down
nobody can hear you can they ?
this poem has had you up to here
belch
this poem aint got no manners
you cant call out frm this poem
relax now & go w/ this poem

move & roll on to this poem
do not resist this poem
this poem has yr eyes
this poem has his head
this poem has his arms
this poem has his fingers
this poem has his fingertips
this poem is the reader & the
reader is this poem

statistic : the us bureau of missing persons reports
that in 1968 over 100,000 people disappeared
leaving no solid clues
nor trace only
a space in the lives of their friends

Poetry Idea: Write a poem warning others of a danger. What is the danger? What will happen to the reader?

Fog
Carl Sandburg

The fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem in which you describe an animal as a form of weather. How does the animal move? Sound? Feel? Look? How is that like the weather?

V for Victory
James Scruton

Two-pronged, it cuts both ways.
Lear's poor forked thing inverted.

A sign to rally by, a silent
Invocation stiff as an upper lip,

Or counter-sign a generation later.
It's taken me till now to see

The soft flesh where the fingers meet,
To hear it as the small, middle "v"

In other words-in *haven*, say, or *lover*-
Words my closed hand couldn't spell.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem about a symbol. What does it look like? What does it stand for? To whom is it important?

Eating Poetry
Mark Strand

Ink runs from the corners of my mouth.
There is no happiness like mine.
I have been eating poetry.

The librarian does not believe what she sees.
Her eyes are sad
and she walks with her hands in her dress.

The poems are gone.
The light is dim.
The dogs are on the basement stairs and coming up.

Their eyes roll,
their blond legs burn like brush.
The poor librarian begins to stamp her feet and weep.
She does not understand.
When I get on my knees and lick her hand, she screams.

I am a new man.
I snarl at her and bark.
I romp with joy in the bookish dark.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem describing your transformation into an animal. What animal would you be? How would you turn into it? What would you do?

What to Think Of Mark Strand

Think of the jungle,
The green steam rising.

It is yours.
You are the prince of Paraguay.

Your minions kneel
Deep in the shade of giant leaves

While you drive by
Benevolent as gold.

They kiss the air
That moments before

Swept over your skin,
And rise only after you've passed.

Think of yourself, almost a god,
Your hair on fire,

The bellows of your heart pumping.
Think of the bats

Rushing out of their caves
Like a dark wind to greet you;

Of the vast nocturnal cities
Of lightning bugs

Floating down
From Minas Gerais;

Of the coral snakes;
Of the crimson birds

With emerald beaks;
Of the tons and tons of morpho butterflies

Filling the air
Like the cold confetti of paradise.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem about your kingdom. Who are your subjects? How are you treated? How do you treat them? What does your kingdom look like?

This Is Just to Say
William Carlos Williams

I have eaten
the plums
that were in
the icebox
and which
you were probably
saving
for breakfast.

Forgive me
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem apologizing for something you are secretly glad you did. Describe what you did and why. Give a gloating apology.

I Wandered Lonely As a Cloud
William Wordsworth

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:

Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company;
I gazed - and gazed - but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Poetry Idea: Write a poem about the thoughts you have to cheer yourself up? What do you imagine in your mind to feel better? What thoughts can change your moods?

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